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Subject: Suggested Edits of Framework re (1) Slavery and Christianity and (2) the Character of Segregation in the Modern Christian Church.

Please consider the following note in your review of the suggested additions to the Framework regarding the link between slavery and Christianity and segregation in the modern Christian church equal in length to the text on “caste” and Hinduism. I am offering these comments based on my professional career researching, teaching, and writing about slavery and race in the United States as well as my role as principal author of a series of educator websites linked to the award-winning PBS documentaries: Slavery in America and The History of Jim Crow in the United States.

(1). The suggested wording on slavery and Christianity is historically accurate and in fact understates somewhat the role played by Christianity in promoting and defending slavery, as rooted in the Christian use of the biblical notion of “Noah’s curse” as a means of accepting the enslavement of Africans by early, medieval, and early modern Christians. From the standpoint of an Americanist, moreover, I would note that American defenders of slavery in the first half of the nineteenth century often argued that slavery was a positive good for the enslaved, allowing them to participate positively in the creation of a Christian community rooted in a hierarchical social order benefitting all its members whether master or enslaved servant. Additionally, some Christian defenders of slavery justified slavery by viewing enslaved Africans as the cursed descendants of Ham while some prominent Christian defenders of slavery offered the novel notion that Africans may have been in the Garden of Eden as lowly tenders of the garden environment before the so-called “Fall” of Adam and Eve from grace.

(2). The suggested added wording on page 559 in the section on Martin Luther King, Jr., regarding the place of segregation in the modern Christian church is historically accurate. By adding these words, students will engage issues of equal substance to wording that negatively and misleadingly targets Hinduism. Specifically, the fact that Christian churches in America are indeed racially segregated in practice but not in doctrine indeed highlights a modern dilemma in how American Christians observe and practice their faith. This segregation grew out of the aftermath of slavery when numerous African-American Christians desired to have their own churches separate and beyond the control of a white establishment even as white Christians moved to separate black Christians from their churches as part of the national efforts to create a segregated society at every level of the social order.